

Message Text

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ORIGIN AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 SIG-01 IO-13 CIAE-00 DODE-00
PM-05 H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01
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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO

AMEMBASSY NAIROBI

AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 017192

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PBOR, ET, US

SUBJECT: AF/E CONTACTS WITH BERHANE DERESSEE AND DAWIT
WOLDE GHIORGIS

REF: STATE 4490

1. BERHANE DERESSE, DIRECTOR, AMERICAN AFFAIRS,
ETHIOPIAN MOFA, MADE COURTESY CALL ON RICHARD POST,
DIRECTOR, AF/E JANUARY 13. POST BRIEFED DERESSE ON THE
PRESIDENT'S TRIP AFTER EXPLAINING THAT ASSISTANT SECRETARY
MOOSE HAD HOPED BRIEF PERMSEC DAWIT (REFTEL) BUT THAT
DIVERGENT ITINERARIES HAD PREVENTED A SECOND MEETING.
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POST NOTED THAT MIDDLE EAST, NOT THE HORN, WAS THE DOMINANT
ISSUE ON THE TRIP. THE HORN CAME UP ONLY PERIPHERALLY.
THE SHAH DID TELL THE PRESIDENT THAT (A) THERE SHOULD BE
SOME SORT OF NEGOTIATIONS TO BRING ABOUT THE END OF THE
OGADEN CONFLICT; (B) IRAN IS CONCERNED THAT SOMALIA'S
TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY NOT BE VIOLATED IN TURN, AND (C)
IRAN IS CONCERNED AT THE EXCESSIVE PRESENCE OF THE SOVIETS

IN ETHIOPIA. THE LAST POINT WAS THE SHAH'S MAIN CONCERN. POST NOTED THAT PRESIDENT WAS NOT CALLED UPON TO REPLY BUT VOLUNTEERED OUR DESIRE FOR A NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENT IN THE OGADEN.

2. BERTHANE ALLUDED TO SHAH'S PUBLIC STATEMENT ON SOMALIA, NOTING THE SHAH WAS ENTITLED TO HIS OWN OPINION BUT HIS STATEMENT DISTURBS MANY PEOPLE AS ONE-SIDED AND COULD APPEAR AS COLLUSION WITH SOMALIA. POST SAID THAT IF SHAH WAS WILLING SPEAK OUT THAT MUCH IN PUBLIC, MANY MUST SUSPECT HE SAID EVEN MORE IN PRIVATE. BUT SUCH WAS NOT THE CASE AS WE HAD JUST EXPLAINED. BERTHANE ASKED WHY SHAH HAD NO CONCERN ABOUT SOVIETS WHEN THEY WERE IN SOMALIA. FURTHERMORE, HE NOTED, SHAH HAS THOUSANDS OF AMERICAN ADVISORS. HE THEN STATED IT WOULD BE VERY UNFORTUNATE IF U.S. EVER ENDORSED SUCH A STATEMENT. STATEMENTS LIKE THAT DO NOT SERVE AS A DETERRENT, IN FACT, THEY SERVE NO PURPOSE AT ALL.

3. CONVERSATION TURNED TO PROBLEM OF NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENT. POST NOTED THAT WE HAD TOLD SOMALIS AT VERY HIGH LEVEL THAT ANY NEGOTIATION IMPLIES LESS THAN 100 PERCENT ACHIEVEMENT OF GOALS SO GSDR MUST START THINKING OF WHAT COMPROMISES IT COULD MAKE. WE THINK ETHIOPIANS SHOULD DO LIKEWISE. BERTHANE SAID NO ONE WOULD NEGOTIATE WITH SOMALIS UNTIL THEY WERE OUT OF THE OGADEN. HE COMPLAINED

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ABOUT DOUBLE STANDARD OF CALLING UPON BOTH TO NEGOTIATE WHEN ONLY SOMALIA WAS AN AGGRESSOR. HE ALSO LAMENTED FACT THAT ALL ARTICLES ON HORN IN POST AND TIMES SEEMED TO BE WARNINGS TO ETHIOPIA. POST SAID OUR ARGUMENT WAS NEITHER WITH ETHIOPIA NOR SOMALIA BUT RATHER SOVIETS WHO ARMED ONE SIDE AND NOW ARE ARMING THE OTHER. THIS CAUSES INCREASED KILLING WHICH LEADS TO INCREASED BITTERNESS AND MAKES FUTURE COOPERATION MORE DIFFICULT.

4. BERTHANE SAID HE APPRECIATED OUR CONCERN BUT ALL INDICATIONS POINT TO U.S. TILT AGAINST ETHIOPIA. HE REFERRED TO PRESIDENT'S WARNING AT JANUARY 12 PRESS CONFERENCE. POST INTERJECTED THAT WARNING WAS TO SOVIETS, NOT ETHIOPIA. BERTHANE REPLIED THAT WARNING SHOULD HAVE BEEN TO SOMALIA TO GET OUT OF OGADEN AND SHOULD HAVE ACCUSED SOMALIA OF AGGRESSION. POST NOTED THAT YOU MAINTAIN A DIALOGUE BY BUILDING UPON IT. SOMALIS HAD BEEN ENCOURAGED BY EXCESSIVE AID FROM ETHIOPIA'S CURRENT BENEFACITOR TO TAKE STEPS IN OGADEN. NOW U.S. WAS TRYING ENCOURAGE SOMALIA TO TURN TO NEGOTIATION OF THE PROBLEM. WE ARE DOING THIS IN PRIVATE RATHER THAN IN PUBLIC SO AS TO AVOID FRACTURING FRAGILE DIALOGUE. UNFORTUNATELY, POST NOTED, OUR DISCUSSIONS WITH ETHIOPIA HAVE BEEN TOO MUCH IN PUBLIC AND NOT

ENOUGH IN PRIVATE. BERTHANE OBSERVED IT WOULD HELP IF US HAD AN AMBASSADOR IN ADDIS. HE THEN ASKED US TO TAKE LEAD AND PLAY POSITIVE ROLE BY CONDEMNING SOMALI AGGRESSION MORE AND LASTING DAMAGE WILL BE DONE TO OUR BILATERAL RELATIONSHIP IF WHAT IS SAID OR DONE IN WASHINGTON ENCOURAGES SOMALIA TO CONTINUE ITS AGGRESSION, HE CONCLUDED. POST NOTED THAT AS SOON AS OGADEN ERUPTED US SUSPENDED ITS AGREEMENT IN PRINCIPLE TO SUPPLY ARMS TO SOMALIA WHICH IN VERY TANGIBLE WAY TOLD SOMALIS WHAT WE THOUGHT OF THEIR ACTIVITIES IN THE OGADEN.

5. POST DESCRIBED AMERICAN POLITICAL CONTEXT IN WHICH USG MUST WORK AND STATED HOPE EPMG IS CONSCIOUS OF WHAT WE ARE DEALING WITH HERE, INCLUDING PRESSURES TO CHANGE
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OUR POLICY OF RESTRAINT ON HORN BECAUSE OF MASSIVE SOVIET PRESENCE IN ETHIOPIA. BERTHANE NOTED HE TOO MUST DEAL WITH POLITICAL PRESSURES EVERY TIME SOME STATEMENT APPEARED IN US PRESS. HE SAID THIS WAS TIME OF TRIAL IN ETHIOPIA AND THE REVOLUTION MUST BE SEEN IN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE. IT WOULD BE A MISTAKE TO VIEW PRESENT TURMOIL AS LONG-TERM PHENOMENON AND A GRAVE INJUSTICE TO FUTURE GENERATIONS TO OVERREACT TO IT.

6. THE FOLLOWING DAY, POST TELEPHONED DAWIT AT ETHIOPIAN PERMREP'S RESIDENCE IN NEW YORK TO READ HIM DEPARTMENT'S REFUTATION OF WASHINGTON STAR ARTICLE ALLEGING US ENCOURAGED SOMALI AGGRESSION (STATE 088016) AND TO RAISE WITH HIM MOFA STATEMENT WHICH THEN JUST RECEIVED. DAWIT ACKNOWLEDGED THAT MOFA STATEMENT WAS UNHELPFUL TO THOSE INTERESTED IN IMPROVING RELATIONS, BUT SAID THAT SAME WAS TRUE OF PRESS ARTICLES AND PUBLIC STATEMENTS IN US, SUCH AS PRESIDENT'S JANUARY 12 PRESS CONFERENCE STATEMENT WHICH SEEMED TO TILT TOWARD SOMALIA. POST CHALLENGED THIS, SAYING THAT HE REALIZED THAT ETHIOPIANS WOULD BE MORE SENSITIVE THAN MOST TO POSSIBLE IMPLICATIONS OF PRESIDENT'S REMARKS BUT THAT UNBIASED OBSERVER WOULD BE UNLIKELY TO SEE A TILT IN EITHER DIRECTION. DAWIT MENTIONED PRESIDENT'S CALL ON SOMALIA TO NEGOTIATE. POST NOTED THAT THIS COULD BE TAKEN TO MEAN THAT PARTY RESPONSIBLE FOR STARTING CONFLICT SHOULD ALSO BE RESPONSIBLE FOR BRINGING IT TO AN END. THEY THEN WENT OVER MUCH OF SAME GROUND AS IN BERTHANE-POST TALK AND ENDED WITH MUTUAL ASSURANCE OF INTENTION TO WORK IN RESPECTIVE COUNTRIES TO IMPROVE RELATIONS. CHRISTOPHER

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